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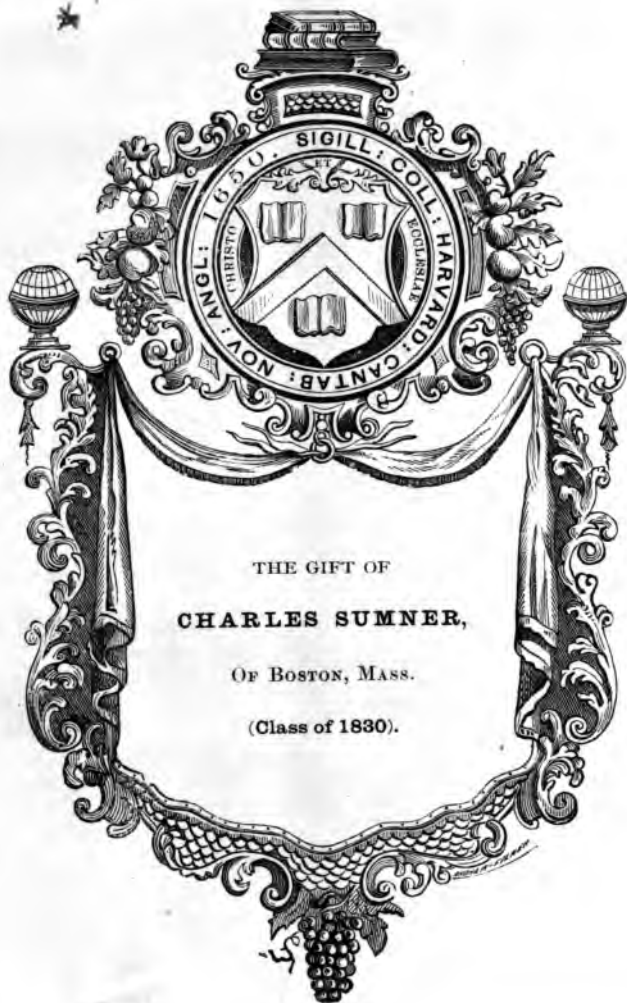
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over Jackson, 1867

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SPEECH

BY

JESSE W. JACKSON,

OF MORGAN COUNTY,

BEFORE THE GEORGIA LEGISLATURE,

IN

THE CAPITOL AT MILLEDGEVILLE,

NOVEMBER 14th, 1866.

—:O:—

MADISON, GA.

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SPEECH.

SUBJECT.—DEBT—RELIEF.

*Gentlemen of the Senate,
and House of Representatives:*

It is now something more than a hundred years ago since that great and good man, Gen. Oglethorpe, founder of the Colony of Georgia, feeling a deep concern for the suffering debtors of England, a large number of whom were shut up in the dreary prisons of that country, because they could not pay their debts, seeing that they could not work while in jail, and earn money to satisfy the demands of their unrelenting creditors, while their families were suffering for bread. Oglethorpe, entertaining a supreme contempt for the folly of putting people in prison for debt, and being a man of influence, and at that time a member of Parliament, prevailed on the King and the honorable body of which he was a member, to agree to a plan for their relief.

The plan agreed on, was to liberate all from confinement who would go to America, and settle in the wilderness south of the Savannah river. In the autumn of 1732, a year made memorable in the annals of the world, by the birth of George Washington, Oglethorpe as their Governor, and a large number from the debtors' prisons of the old country, sailed for the New World, and landed where the city of Savannah now stands. On that spot the adventurers built rude cabins, and laid the foundation of the great colony of Georgia.

I have thus alluded to this brief historical record, to show the cruelty and persecutions which our ancestors endured from their heartless oppressors in old England, which caused them to bid farewell to their native land forever, with all its fond and cherished recollections, to seek a home and resting place amidst the wilds of our beloved Georgia.

Ah? it would indeed prove a difficult task, to tell the mingled feelings of joy and sorrow heaving the bosoms of the adventurers; joy in so unexpectedly emerging from solitary confinement, sorrow at thus being driven from their native land to peril the stormy billows of the ocean, and beyond the trackless deep, seek a home in the wilderness; a land never yet trodden by the white man, with no companionship save that of the ferocious wild beasts and savage Aborigines of America, roaming its wilds undisturbed.

Gentlemen of the General Assembly, draw your own comparison between the condition and circumstances surrounding those of our ancestry, who landed on the soil we now tread under this strange and trying ordeal, and that of their posterity in these latter days. The contemplation of this solemn subject must lead us to exclaim in agony of soul: *Oh! That there was an Oglethorpe to aid the people.*

After the close of the war; and ad-

Journalment of the Reconstruction Convention, looking abroad over our desolated land; seeing that about three-fourths of the wealth of our people had been destroyed by emancipation, State repudiation, by fire and the sword: while millions of personal indebtedness was in existence based on property thus destroyed. I was led to inquire what should, and must be done to save our people from financial ruin. *Those of my own blood and kindred race and color.*

I thought from the signs looming up in the horizon, unless relief be given, a vast majority of the bone and sinew, the patriotic, the generous, the sole repository of a national honor and a national glory; those upon whom perils and hardships of the late bloody struggle had fallen with peculiar violence—must sink down inevitably into the vail of poverty without Legislative intervention.—And that a rigorous enforcement of existing laws, by a co ordinate branch of the Government, would be a death blow to the people, and place them far below a level, of the millions of the manumitted African race, *in their financial affairs.*

In the contemplation of this solemn subject, the exclamation has often crossed my mind: Great God, shield our people from the violence of the impending storm—from the iron-hearted grasp of a few lucky moneyed men, who will show no mercy—upon the altar of whose darkened souls not a spark of humanity has ever shown, with its benignant rays.

With profound reverence, I would implore the searcher of all hearts, to purge out every pulsation of mine that beats not high in the cause of civil liberty. But I must say, I pre-

fer the liberty of my own to that of any other country; and the liberty of my own to that of any other race.—A vast majority of our people are involved, and without *relief*, will in future only know what freedom is by name, not in reality. *No man in debt is a freeman, the dearest boon known to our poor, fallen, perishing humanity.*

In retrospecting the mighty past, I have in vain sought to bring to light, one solitary instance, amidst the uprising and downfall of empires and nations, recorded on the annals of history, from the present eventful period down the long dim vista of the world's progress for six thousand years to Creation's early dawn, to find a parallel for the present anomalous position of our race and people. in these so-called rebellious States which have just emerged from a bloody and destructive revolution, which will be known as the great American rebellion of the 19th century. The learned historian might rummage the archives of ancient lore—plough up the whole classic field of antiquity in vain *to find its parallel.*

I appear before you this evening, not in the capacity of an office-seeker, or a politician; but as one of the people from the private walks of life, only professing to know something of the wretched condition and necessities of my unfortunate fellow-countrymen. I know this subject to be one of vital moment, affecting the present and future generations. One in which almost every man, woman, and child are either directly or remotely concerned. Twelve months ago, I was deeply impressed with the vast importance involved in this mo-

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mentous question. It had but few friends at that time, but, I am profoundly thankful to Almighty God that its friends now are legion all over the State with the welcome news *that they are still increasing.*

It is to be expected that there will be opposition to *relief* in almost every section; and I regret there is bitter hostility against *any relief whatever*, by a few; yet there is great consolation to be derived from the fact, that this hostility is not from principle, but alone from self-interest. No man upon earth can sustain himself, and show that he is an opponent of this cause of *humanity and civilization* from principle. *Sympathy, justice and honesty, alike demand an equitable adjustment of these financial difficulties.*

It is a great principle recognized by all writers on moral science, that we are formed for society, and unless perverted from our natural channel, we have tendencies manifestly directed to the good of society. Our philosophy is, therefore, false to nature—when it assumes that every man ought to live for himself. Now, the loss of 9-tenths of the money due the creditor in our State would not do injury to society, while *if no relief were given, society would be torn up root and branch.* This is a contest between a landed aristocracy and the people. There is enough personal indebtedness in the hands of a few in each county in Georgia, *to buy up every foot of land in the State if forced to sale.*

Between two courses of conduct we are under moral obligation to choose that which will conduce most to universal good. All the world should reprobate the man, having al-

ready a competency in life, yet whose grasping avarice would snatch the last morsel of bread from the unfortunate, upon whom the fortunes of war have fallen heavily. From the bereaved widow and orphan children of the brave and heroic soldier who perished in battle, and whose chivalrous bones lie bleaching on the plains of the bloody fields of the late war; *many of whom have never been honored with even so much as a grave in which to rest.*

The man obeying the promptings of self-love—seeking his own—blinded to the interest of all around, should be condemned by the unanimous voice of all good men the world over. While praise and immortality should be awarded him who scorns the accumulation of wealth, to the ruin of his neighbors, and the destruction of society, I would, with all my heart, implore divine blessings on him *whose lofty soul prompts a sacrifice for the good of his suffering countrymen.*

What can be said to extenuate the actions of the deciple of Mammon, whose avaricious propensities burn in his darkened conscience, with an unconquerable thirst and irresistible sway, holding undisputed possession of his narrow contracted soul? Who in this perilous hour of our country's history, would reduce to starvation those of his own blood and kindred, and wade through an ocean of tears, drawn from suffering humanity around him? Stay thy righteous vengeance, O. Heaven!—suffer not the earth to open wide and swallow him up; *spare him yet a little while, that he may repent of his great sin!*

The most pernicious and accursed

spirit, brought to the surface by this revolution, is an insatiable thirst for "filthy lucre"—knowing no leniency nor mercy for a poor conquered people—*plunged in the vale of poverty.*

The unprecedented amount of litigation going on in all portions of our State, is an unmistakeable sign of the calibre of the men who have come into possession of most of the negotiable paper in the country. By speculation, extortion, and otherwise equally as criminal, the indebtedness has been gathered into their polluted hands, much of it by using Confederate money to carry on their nefarious purposes, refusing to take it where a man had land upon which they could lay their grasp after the war. Gentlemen of the Legislature, this, is the class soon to swallow up this country. *Shall they be allowed to do so? I say, no, never!*

Compounding and compromising debts, without legislation, can never prove efficient, for it is needless to appeal to those whose ears are sealed up to the cries of humanity; whose eyes are closed to the heart-rending scenes of poverty that surround them. The man whose God is mammon, at whose unholy shrine he is a devout worshipper—the purpose of whose soul is to hoard up money—is well described by Milton: "From orbs convulsed should all the planets fly, World crush on world and ocean mix with sky; He unconcerned would view the falling whole, And still maintain the purpose of his soul."

Is there one under the sound of my voice who will say no relief should be given the debtor; when the property on which this indebtedness was based has been lost without fault of his; without his will or consent; without dishonesty on the part of the debtor? If there are

such present, pardon me for appealing, to you by every obligation which you owe to God, to your fellow man, and to yourselves, to be certain the right is with you; that, in opposing relief, the duty is imperative, *ere you enter on this cold hearted massacre of the dearest hopes of your fellow man.*

Life, liberty and property were all involved in the gigantic struggle from which we have just emerged. Would there be the least violation of the most exalted principles of morality, to throw the negotiable paper in the scale? *Does not justice between man and man, and honesty in the sight of God, alike demand it?*

If, in an hour of excited feeling, looking to self and self only, making this your centre and circumference, or, from other reasons, you fail to act on this momentous question as faithful public servants thus, willfully consigning thousands of the gallant and the brave, the noble and generous of our land to financial ruin, and afterwards discover the deed was one of great moral turpitude; that the blood of the innocent polluted our hands; that the cries of the fatherless were ascending to Heaven, against you—oh, how could you silence the sad reproaches of a guilty conscience, how atone for the widespread ruin and irreparable mischief—and how, as a people, efface from our fair escutcheon the infamous stain that would be stamped upon us! Those who oppose this cause are in imminent danger of error. In a duty so awfully obligatory we should be sure we come to a correct conclusion. It is human to err, but divine to forgive. If we err at all,

it should ever be on the side of mercy.

If I know my own heart, I can say of a truth, I would to God some system, or plan of a just and equitable relief could be inaugurated, without the slightest possible irritation to any good and fair-dealing man—that this adjustment could be possible without pecuniary loss to a single human being who deserves the money. This being an impossibility, and such is the frailty and depravity of human nature in its most enlightened form, to await the day when no hostility shall be arrayed would be vanity in the extreme.

I should do violence to my own conscience, prove faithless to my own heart, were I, from the fears of the frowns of the opulent, or intimidation by false accusations that I seek my own self-interest, to refrain from the utterance of my sentiments and feelings, when the happiness and temporal salvation of my friends, neighbors and fellow-countrymen is in imminent peril.

These people are my associates, fellow sufferers in the vale of poverty—among whom I expect to live and raise my family, and with whom I hope when life's fleeting day is past—to pay the last tribute of nature; My sympathies are with the unfortunate, the poor, the destitute. I have and will avow my feelings and sentiments in their behalf just so long as there remains the baseless fabric of a vision upon which to rest my hopes of success to the cause I have honestly espoused.

All questions of a political character sink down to insignificance when compared to this. Without *reluct the few will swallow up the*

many; the poor become poorer, the rich richer. The foundations of society torn asunder, gloomy shadows overspread the land from the seaboard to the mountains. O, then, my countrymen, should we not all be united on this great humanitarian cause of giving relief, where inexorable justice between man and man and in the sight of high Heaven alike demand. We have been divided between ourselves in times past, on questions now buried in oblivion. Those who favored were honest alike with those who opposed, the action which involved us in a mighty war, and deluged the land in blood. *I allude to the yeomanry, the virtuous toiling millions of these States.*

Gentlemen of the Legislature: There is a good old maxim, "Where there is a will there is a way," and still another—"Equity knows no wrong without a remedy." We profess to be heirs of liberty. It is the crowning glory of all republican governments, that all political power rests in the hands of the people.—But it would indeed be a libel on that hallowed term were it impossible for the suffering millions to obtain relief from the financial troubles which afflict the land.

The landed property in our State, without Legislative action at this session of the Legislature, would soon fall into the hands of a few moneyed men—if it were possible for the decrees of our Courts to be executed. And if this mighty storm should burst forth in terrific violence on the devoted heads of our people, the blame will rest upon those placed in authority as guardians of the public good.

While many creditors are not disposed to press their debtors to the wall, knowing there is no money in the land, no help at hand, (and this class have acted with a magnanimity worthy of commendation,) yet there are disciples of Mammon who have in all ages of the world cursed mankind—deaf to the cries of a perishing orphan—upon whose ears the wail of a poor, bereaved widow has no restraining power. Oh, let this flood of evil be stayed, this murky tide be dyked, or the people will be consumed by the scorching fire and burning avarice of these men!

There are those who acknowledge the justice of "Relief," and its accomplishment possible, were it not for that clause of the United States Constitution forbidding any State passing a law impairing the obligation of private contracts. In my opinion, Relief is possible without conflict with that instrument.

No constitutional authority on earth could free the negro, but Georgia, in the sovereign capacity of a Convention, by the ratification of the Constitutional Amendment abolishing slavery, now, henceforth and forever—The mighty lever that moved in majestic grandeur the ponderous wheels of Southern industry, has been stricken down. Georgia can violate her contracts by repudiation of eighteen millions of her people's money; strip them of capital and resources on which these debts were based; authorize, by act of the Legislature, the Treasurer to sell State bonds, and then kill the same in your hands, and hold you responsible; set you to delve and toil the balance of your life to bring forth the money destroyed. If there ever can be an infringement on the

supreme law of the land, in securing relief, that work has been consummated already, and we only need laws to relieve us now of the oppression and anomalous circumstances under which it has placed us.

This matter of relief was a work for the Reconstruction Convention, but it is passing strange to say, no man in that august body of reconstructors would deign to raise his voice for the toiling millions. They must be reduced to bankruptcy, and take the place of the negro, as a vacancy had just been made by giving him his freedom. *Reconstruction is not, nor never will be complete until this matter is settled by law—things must be made to harmonize.*

I would remark, just upon this point, if the Union was supreme, the author and maker of the States, the argument might be regarded as plausible that no relief was possible; but as the States made the Union, it is therefore impossible the creature can have a divine right to rule the creator, in matters involving her own internal affairs.

"I have no commiseration for princes, but my sympathies are reserved for the great mass of mankind." This was the language of our unrivalled statesman, the prince of American orators; and should be the motto of every Representative man in this Republican land of ours. The toiling millions deserve sympathy, succor and aid; and the man whose heart does not beat for this class is unworthy of place or power; and if unfortunately such a man now holds position or authority, he should be hurled back into obscurity forever, by the righteous indignation of a free people.

The man who has voluntarily taken upon himself the vast responsibility to be incurred as a representative of the people, should possess no narrow contracted views, but should cherish enlarged sympathies, looking abroad on the community with his eyes and ears open to the distress of the humblest of his constituents; to see how much suffering he can alleviate and how much good he can do. *His great ruling principle in all his official acts, should be sympathy, fidelity, justice, mercy and humanity.*

He who is vested with authority, and endowed with these estimable qualities will be aroused to action; he can no more refrain from action than he can violate the great laws of his being; all the powers of mind with which he may be invested by nature's God, will be brought into exercise, to embrace the largest number of unfortunate and the *widest possible sphere of suffering.*

My countrymen—let your imaginations survey the field, look abroad over an impoverished and desolated land, a howling wilderness of desolation meets your saddening gaze, millions of our race and color, blood and kindred conquered, vanquished and poverty stricken. Three-fourths of the wealth of these States lost forever without remuneration; while millions upon millions of personal indebtedness exists, concentrated in the hands of capitalists, who will show no clemency.

These claims were based on the negro and other property lost by the disastrous results of the war; and yet it is true the late Convention took no action to save the country from bankruptcy! And can it be true that Gov. Jenkins, seven members of the

House, and a few in the Senate, would give our people not a day to work out, *but consign them to the vale of poverty without a tear?* Oh! is there a philanthropist, patriot—whatever may be his calling or station in life—who cannot shed tears of blood over the appalling distress brought upon our afflicted land?

In the burning words and lofty eloquence of the bard and romancer of North Britain, I would exclaim:

"Lives there a man, so cold and dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
"This is my own, my native land?"

No man, who loves a Republican Government, or believes in it, can have any sympathy for a despotism, which is known to be the deadliest enemy to liberty that afflicts the earth. But whenever the people of Georgia drift headlong into a landed aristocracy, they are at once crushed down under the iron heel of a despotism of the most direful character. *Mark the prediction.* The war, with its horrors, has passed away; the sife and drum supplanted by the more welcome sounds of the anvil and the forge; industry, in all its varied branches, in feebleness struggling to rise. The masses of our people have nothing left but their homes. Their lands are now their sole dependence, from which a scanty subsistence may be derived by great industry, self denial and rigid economy.

Oh, shall they be deprived of this humble inheritance, be reduced to fifty acres of red hills and yawning gullies, to add to the well filled coffers of the extortioner, the speculator on negotiable paper, and thus be turned out upon the wide world as *pilgrims and beggars upon the earth.*

A distinguished orator and statesman of a former generation on a certain important occasion, used this lofty sentiment with surpassing eloquence: *"I aspire to possess a stout heart and a steady eye, that can survey unmoved and undaunted any mere personal peril that can assail this poor transient, perishing frame. But I cannot lay myself down in the way of the welfare and happiness of my country. I cannot for my personal benefit, or self-aggrandizement check her onward march to greatness and glory. I would not, I dare not lie down and place my body across the path that leads my country to prosperity and happiness."*

This is that higher and nobler courage, laying aside all sordid interest, a weak pusillanimous spirit; daring to stand up boldly as a patriot and philanthropist, ready and willing to sacrifice his own for his country's good.

It is the bird of night that warbles its inharmonious strains in the midnight gloom and solitude of the forest, fearing to burst forth its hideous sounds amid the open light of day. But the eagle that brushes its wing against the cloud, bathes its plumes on the misty mountain's top and looks boldly in the face of the sun.

This question of Relief is a momentous one, addressing itself to every honest heart and intelligent mind.—Especially the man honored by the suffrages of the people to guide the helm of State, should reflect dispassionately that the ends of justice may be attained, making a fair comparison of its certain or probable ills with its possible gains, and then pronounce the sentence with justice, humanity and policy demand, and a

suffering, disheartened people will bless that decision.

We live for the future, not the past. It is a sacred duty to provide for ourselves and our posterity; to make the world better and happier around us; to labor for the greatness, glory and prosperity of the land that has given us birth. The existence of society and preservation of our race hangs on this question.

While our heart-felt sympathies should run out for all nations and people ground down to tyranny and misrule, and if within our power aid to break the chains with which they are bound, oh let us not forget the duties we owe our own country, are only secondary to the duties we owe our God.

His Excellency addressed a special message to your body, at your last session, favoring relief of the Banks, and gave all the weight of his official influence, even by a veto, against allowing one single hour for the people to work out their enormous liabilities. It may be said he was governed by conscientious motives—the Stay law was in his opinion unconstitutional. Now, search with all the strength of your natural vision, aided by the most powerful microscopic assistance, and tell me how it can be just and constitutional to relieve corporations of liabilities and penalties, *and not the people!* The policy of the Executive would leave the debtor at the mercy of the creditor, while the latter is more to be blamed for this indebtedness.

Every public man should possess that high ennobling, exalted and sublime emotion reigning supreme over the heart of a patriot, whose absorbing and soul transporting thought is the good and glory of his country.—

That patriotism, indebted to heaven for its inspiration, soaring far away at an immeasurable distance above all prevailing self interests. *This my countrymen, and this alone, is public virtue.*

Some men talk and act as if the people were made for the government, and not the government for the people. It is a truthful saying that the worst form of government in the world is a military despotism, but the most heartless and despicable form of despotism on earth, is capital concentrated in the hands of the few, for the oppression and depredation of the many. *Is there not danger of our being drifted into this whirlpool of ruin?*

The mighty conflict of arms which baptized this continent in blood, has been alike destructive of property and human life; mourning and sorrow has visited almost every household. We are now among the poorest people on earth. The bright luminary of heaven in his majestic progress round the world, shed's not his cheering rays on a people once so prosperous now so poor.

I hold it to be a great ruling principle, that every individual or association of individuals, has the natural right to make and enforce such laws, as may be most promotive of its own social and domestic policy. So long as such laws do not affect the inalienable rights of others or the great natural law.

Every State is entitled to, and should be left, to the free exercise of its own discretion in the inauguration and maintenance of such regulations as may be designed for its own domestic policy. Only let this grand principle be denied, and the whole theory of self-government

falls prostrate to the ground.

This principle is founded on truth, with reason and justice. What can be more unreasonable or unjust than to compel a people to submit to laws absolutely oppressive and deprive them of all power to remedy the evil?

Each independent State, so far as the establishment and preservation of its own domestic rules are concerned, must stand in the relation of a foreign government to all the world. Upon these grand and glorious principles is laid the very foundation of good society, and forms the chief corner-stone of civil and religious liberty.

There are some debts that should be paid—*many that should not*—The creditors of the country, who have been indulgent would realize more money by wiping out all coercive measures of law, than if *no relief were given*. The heartless sharper who has run his claims into execution would bankrupt the country, and leave nothing for any one else.

I have often heard the question propounded, "where is the justice in depriving the creditor for the sake of the debtor?" But ah! there is a very great difference. The debtor class are the masses; the creditor the exception, nine-tenths of whom—were they to lose every dollar—would still live comfortably, and be, by far, the richest people in the country.

Millions of these claims are due in Confederate scrip, or bought with the same on speculation. This accursed traffic was carried on during the war by a set of soulless, nonied mongers—peering sharply in the dim, misty future, these blood-suck-

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I thought from the signs looming up in the horizon, unless relief be given, a vast majority of the bone and sinew, the patriotic, the generous, the sole repository of a national honor and a national glory; those upon whom perils and hardships of the late bloody struggle had fallen with peculiar violence—must sink down inevitably into the vail of poverty without Legislative intervention.—And that a rigorous enforcement of existing laws, by a co ordinate branch of the Government, would be a death blow to the people, and place them far below a level, of the millions of the manumitted African race, *in their financial affairs.*

In the contemplation of this solemn subject, the exclamation has often crossed my mind: Great God, shield our people from the violence of the impending storm—from the iron-hearted grasp of a few lucky monied men, who will show no mercy—upon the altar of whose darkened souls not a spark of humanity has ever shown, with its benignant rays.

With profound reverence, I would implore the searcher of all hearts, to purge out every pulsation of mine that beats not high in the cause of civil liberty. But I must say, I pre-

fer the liberty of my own to that of any other country; and the liberty of my own to that of any other race.—A vast majority of our people are involved, and without relief, will in future only know what freedom is by name, not in reality. *No man in debt is a freeman, the dearest boon known to our poor, fallen, perishing humanity.*

In retrospecting the mighty past, I have in vain sought to bring to light, one solitary instance, amidst the uprising and downfall of empires and nations, recorded on the annals of history, from the present eventful period down the long dim vista of the world's progress for six thousand years to Creation's early dawn, to find a parallel for the present anomalous position of our race and people. In these so-called rebellious States which have just emerged from a bloody and destructive revolution, which will be known as the great American rebellion of the 19th century. The learned historian might rummage the archives of ancient lore—plough up the whole classic field of antiquity in vain *to find its parallel.*

I appear before you this evening, not in the capacity of an office-seeker, or a politician; but as one of the people from the private walks of life, only professing to know something of the wretched condition and necessities of my unfortunate fellow-countrymen. I know this subject to be one of vital moment, affecting the present and future generations. One in which almost every man, woman, and child are either directly or remotely concerned. Twelve months ago, I was deeply impressed with the vast importance involved in this wo-

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duced to insolvency, enterprise and industry will be paralyzed, and a universal spirit of despondency overshadow the land. The farmer is the bone and sinew of the country. When he prospers, all others reap the reward of his prosperity; when he fails it is known and felt throughout the land. Should his hopes be blasted, the earth at his bidding refuse to yield forth her abundance, then starvation would stalk abroad, with ponderous tread, amidst universal desolation—the earth herself be draped in mourning, and the perishing millions of the world's teeming population cry out in wild despair.

Oh! shall this hitherto thrifty and noble class, honest toiling yeomanry, who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, whose stiffened fingers and sun-browned countenances tell of their laborious calling; who know nothing of intrigues to seek advantages of their fellow man or their own self aggrandizement. I repeat shall they now be deprived of all that is desirable in life; their joyous prospects forever blasted; tied hand and foot, cast into outer darkness, to grope their way along life's toilsome journey, and finally sink down into an untimely grave, *unwept, unhonored and unsung.*

Failure of crops, heavy taxation and the streightened circumstances of our people, places it out of their power, as now required, to pay the fourth of all their debts. A continuance then of the stay law becomes an absolute necessity, even if nothing more was done to prevent the sacrifice of property for debts made during and before the war, or *lawless desperation and bloodshed will be the inevitable consequence.*

If the Legislature fail to take action, or the Supreme Court declare null and void the stay law, then a Convention of the people to save themselves is the alternative to avert great trouble and a scene of terror. During the late bloody drama, even in the darkest hours of the struggle—while the storm was howling in all its fury, a high regard for law and order was observed, unparalleled in the world's history.—*But dark will be the day when the decrees of Courts are disregarded and lawlessness reigns supreme.*

This matter of Relief to the People, reaches the hearthstone of every family. Those not affected in a pecuniary sense cannot be otherwise than deeply concerned for the preservation of our race and the salvation of society. I cannot believe there is a solitary member of the Georgia Legislature who will say by word or action, *I will not trust the people.*

If bound down by constitutional restrictions, throw this vast responsibility back upon the sovereign people and your skirts will be clear, whatever may be your own peculiar views. Oh no, my countrymen, live or die, survive or perish, let us never be afraid to trust the people.

I would not presume to dictate to this honorable body—my object being to present the necessity, rather than the practicability of this great question. Yet I would venture to suggest, if you doubt your jurisdiction in the premises, policy and wisdom demand its reference to a body elected with a view to its adjournment.

Tens of thousands of our people failed to vote at the last election,

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and politic, suited to the wonderful change that has been wrought. We should not await the passage of a Bankrupt law, which would not meet our condition if adopted, nor should our people be reduced to this humiliating extremity.

His Excellency, the Governor, has not even made the most distant allusion in his message, to this vital subject of Relief. This strange omission will strike the people of Georgia with profound astonishment. We find, however, in reading through the voluminous pages of that document, judicious counsel on our national affairs.

He says: *"It behooves us above all, to keep ourselves in proper relation with the Supreme Ruler of the universe."* It is true, while murky clouds overshadow our political horizon, and muttering thunders are heard in the distance. We are but inactive observers of the mighty events transpiring, and must recline upon that Almighty being—

"That rides upon the stormy sky,
And calms the roaring seas."

Our people are groping their way

in darkness, weighed down in agony of soul. Many of the noblest of earth among the aged are being buried, and many have already been borne to the grave by the heartrending contemplation of home lost forever. In this perishing world of frail humanity, no word in the vocabulary of language lights up the heart with so great delight. *But ah, what gloomy shadows enshroud the soul when all that is dear in life has past away.*

Gentlemen of the Legislature, I stand in this time honored old capitol of the glorious Commonwealth of Georgia, where I stood nearly twelve months ago, pleading this cause of *humanity and civilization*. And I will beg leave to say in conclusion, if our ruin is to be consummated, the great masses of our unfortunate race to be crushed down, turned *houseless, homeless* wanderers on the earth, oh, let not your garments be stained WITH BLOOD WRENCHED FROM THE HEARTS OF YOUR POOR, CONQUERED POVERTY-STRICKEN COUNTRYMEN.



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